



Legionnaire's Control Group Aruba introduces an informative booklet

The Legionella Control Group Aruba (LCG) was established in 2002 and is a council of water and health experts including management from W.E.B., Aruba's national supplier of water, staff from Horacio E. Oduber Hospital, the Health Department, Landslaboratorium and members of the Aruba Hotel Engineers Association (AHEA.) On Monday morning, July 30 they introduced an informative flyer aimed at educating the public regarding facts and prevention of notorious "Legionnaires' Disease."

Kelvin Augustin, Director of Communications for W.E.B. hosted the presentation at the Renaissance Marina Tower with the formal presentation made by Legionnaires' Disease expert Riem v/d Berg of the Landslaboratorium. Aruba has never been plagued with Legionnaire's Disease, but experts report that the bacteria that causes it is present in "sweet water" at all times, and now during the popular summer vacation break individuals should be informed and vigilant regarding circumstances that could result in an outbreak.

Legionnaire's Disease is an infectious disease characterized by high fever, dry cough, lung congestion, and subsequent pneumonia. The disease struck over 180 people attending an American Legion convention in Philadelphia in July 1976—hence the name. The causative bacterium, later identified as *Legionella pneumophila*, is inhaled via contaminated water droplets, primarily from air conditioning and ventilation systems. A milder form of the disease has also been identified. The disease is not passed from person to person, nor through drinking or washing in water that is contaminated with low numbers of bacteria. Legionnaires' disease is also associated with potting composts, though the route of transmission isn't confirmed, but could be by breathing in dusts or aerosols from the potting mix. *Legionella longbeachae* can survive on unwashed hands for half an hour, so people should wash their hands after potting plants and gardening. The disease doesn't affect everyone who comes into contact with the bacteria, but those most at risk are people whose immune systems are compromised in some way. For several days during the incubation period of the disease, you may feel tired and weak. The incubation period can be between 2 to 10 days after being exposed to the bacteria. Once diagnosed, there are antibiotics that are highly effective against the bacteria, especially if taken early enough. An antibiotic called erythromycin is often the first choice.

The growth of *Legionella pneumophila* tends to take place in water systems that remain stagnant. Prevention entails keeping water systems moving, and flushing systems that have remained stagnant such as in a domicile or resort that has been closed for some time. When returning to a home that has been vacant for weeks during vacation,, the water systems should be completely cleaned out first, as should the air conditioning systems. While the lid closed, toilets should be flushed several time, as should shower heads and faucets along with hoses for watering the garden and air conditioners. A flyer printed in Papiamentu will be delivered to all domiciles in Aruba with important and detailed information. It is also available at offices of the Aruba Department of Health in both English and Dutch. For more information about Legionnaires' disease, detection and prevention contact the Department of Contagious Diseases, telephone #582-3040 or e-mail dbz@aruba.gov.aw.